

# CARBON MONOXIDE

Questions to ask your clients...

Hopefully, you have been able to attend one of the Gas Safe charity's free Think CO carbon monoxide awareness workshops or completed the e-learning course.

This guide is a reminder of the content from this training.



Tell me  
about your  
home?

As a way of easing your client into questions about potential CO risks, start by finding out a bit about their home. This is a chance to hear about where your client lives and will help you understand their situation and any risks they may face.

Is it easy  
to keep  
warm?

# CARBON MONOXIDE

Questions to ask your clients...

## FUEL

A conversation with your client to find out if they use any of the potential sources of CO is useful. If, for example, your client lives in a property which is all electric (i.e. no mains gas, no oil fired heating, no coal fire or wood burning stove), it is very unlikely to be CO that is making them unwell.

Do you have gas heating or use a gas cooker?

## HEALTH

If client starts to talk about feeling tired all the time, having headaches and feeling nauseous, these are all possible symptoms of CO poisoning, so should be explored a little further.

It's always worth finding out if a client has an awareness of CO, so you can build on what they know.

How are you feeling?

Do you know about carbon monoxide?

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Questions to ask your clients...

## HEALTH

As a follow-up question, ask people if they feel the same when they are not in their home. If people say they feel better when they are outside in the garden or go to work or pop down the shops, but feel unwell again when back home, this is worth exploring further.

“how do you feel when you're not at home?”

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Questions to ask your clients...

## PREVENTION

A conversation with your client to find out when they last had their gas appliances checked will help you think through if they could be at CO risk. If the appliances have been checked every year by a Gas Safe registered engineer, it reduces the chances of them not working well and CO being produced as a result.

All gas appliances should be serviced every year and always by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

When did you last get your gas appliances serviced?



[gassaferegister.co.uk](http://gassaferegister.co.uk)



0800 408 5500

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Questions to ask your clients...

## PREVENTION

If they have a working CO detector, that's great. They should test it once a week to make sure the batteries are still working and that they can hear the alarm if it goes off.

They should look to see if the red warning light on the CO detector is flashing. If it is a digital CO detector, they should check how many PPM (parts per million) of CO is it reading. If the light is flashing repeatedly and often, or if the PPM is reading anything other than zero, the client should get a Gas Safe registered engineer in to check their gas appliances.

Do you have  
a working CO  
detector?

CO detectors don't  
last forever!  
They need replacing  
every 5-7 years to  
ensure they are working  
properly. Check the expiry  
date on the detector and  
replace if out of date.


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Further information...

## REMEMBER

If people think “carbon monoxide poisoning”, people tend to assume that it is an emergency situation with someone collapsed on the floor. This does happen, but, thankfully, is very rare.


What most people who are poisoned by CO experience is low level poisoning, often over weeks, months or even years. It's suspected that many thousands of people across the UK experience low level CO poisoning which can affect their lives. Long-term, low level CO exposure can cause brain damage, memory loss, difficulty concentrating and other symptoms similar to dementia.



More than 60 people  
a year die accidentally  
from CO poisoning  
across the UK



4,000 people go to A&E  
each year with CO poisoning



200 people are  
admitted to hospital  
each year from CO  
poisoning



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Further information...

People don't know they are being poisoned by CO as it is a gas which you can't see hear, taste, smell or touch. Our senses are unable to detect when CO is present.

see X

hear X

taste X

smell X

touch X

As a result, people can be living with a CO leak and simply not know that they are. Also, though most people have heard of "carbon monoxide" and understand that it is dangerous and a gas, few people think of it as a cause of them feeling unwell – people think that they are feeling "under the weather" or "coming down with something". An issue can be that because you are living in a place with low level CO, you feel unwell all of the time, and you can get used to it.

Another factor is that people feel better once they leave the place where there is CO. So, you feel better if you leave your home and go to the shops or do some gardening or go to the doctors. You feel better because you are leaving the home where there is CO and you breath in fresh oxygen; any symptoms you have that indicate that you are being poisoned will go. However, the symptoms will come back once you go back into the room with CO.

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Sources...

## SOURCES

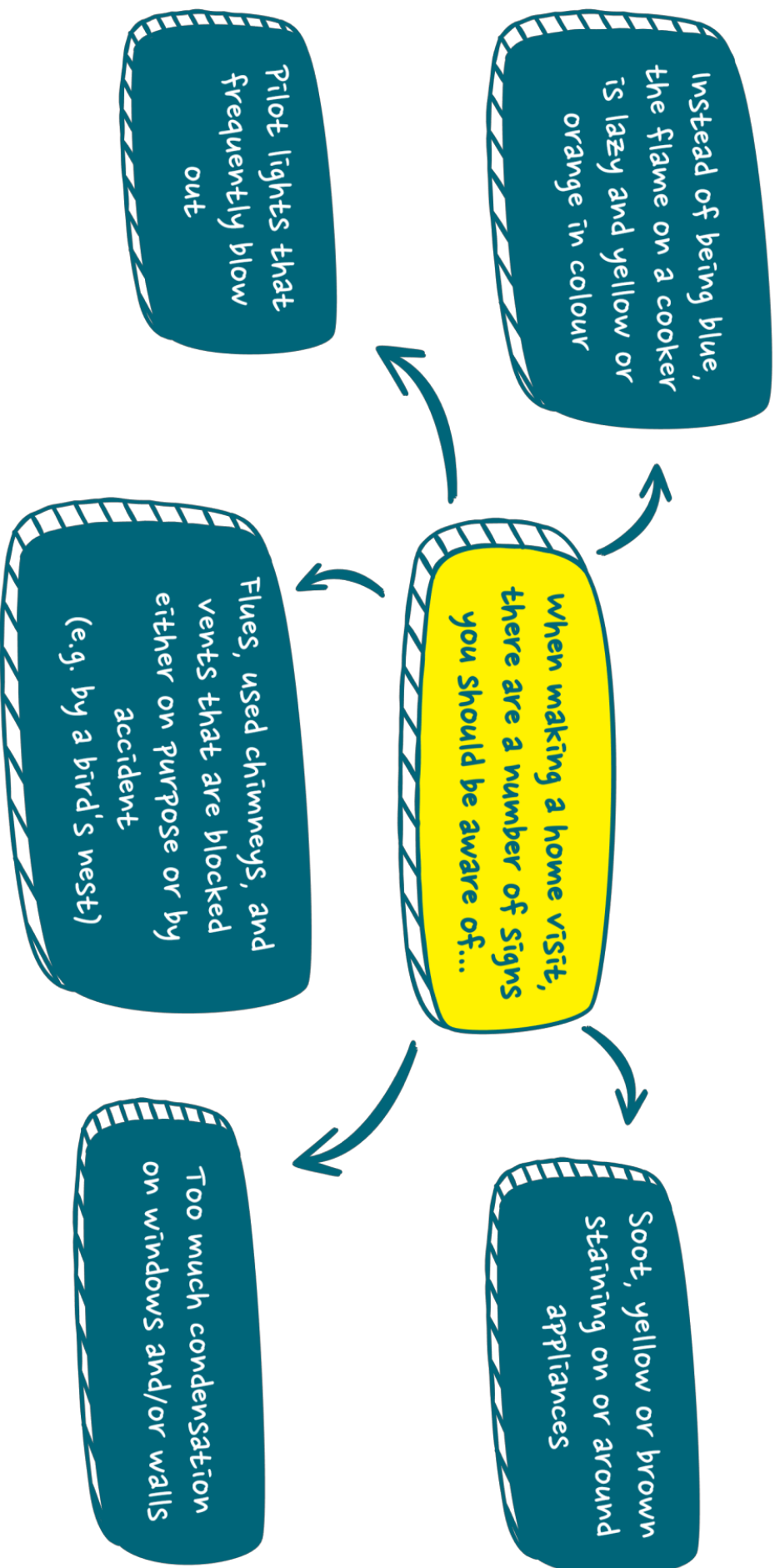
carbon monoxide is formed if there is a faulty appliance or blocked flue or chimney, which results in there not being enough oxygen for an appliance to burn correctly and effectively. Any appliance that is fuelled by a carbon-based fuel has the potential for CO to be formed if it isn't working properly.

As well as gas cookers, boilers and fires, other sources can be LPG/calor gas appliances, coal fires, wood burning stoves, oil fired central heating and any petrol or diesel engine.



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Signs...



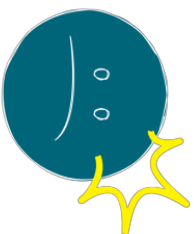
Carbon monoxide is formed if there is a faulty appliance or blocked flue or chimney, which results in there not being enough oxygen for an appliance to burn correctly and effectively.

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## Symptoms...

### Low level poisoning:

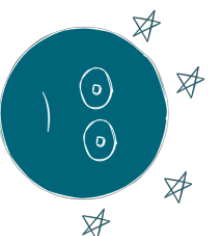
A common first symptom is being unusually tired, as well as headaches, feeling sick and feeling dizzy. These can be misdiagnosed as flu or food poisoning, but they seem to last a long time. With CO poisoning there is no high temperature.



HEADACHES



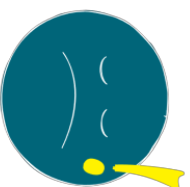
NAUSEA



DIZZINESS



BREATHLESSNESS



COLLAPSE



LOSS OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS

### High level poisoning:

Symptoms include difficulty breathing, collapsing and losing consciousness.

There are numerous other symptoms that have been associated with CO poisoning, particularly over a long period of time. If a client is describing some symptoms not covered above, they should not be dismissed and should be investigated further.

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Priority Services Register...

If your client is worried and are vulnerable, encourage them to contact their local Fire and Rescue Service and arrange for a Safe and well check. Encourage your client to find out if they are eligible to go on their energy supplier's Priority Services Register. The PSR is a free support service to help people in vulnerable situations. Energy suppliers and network operators offer it. Each keeps their own register. People need to contact their energy supplier or network operator to get on it.

In Northern Ireland, the service is called the customer care Register.

If on the PSR, energy suppliers can provide free gas safety checks (e.g. for appliances such as a gas boiler) for some homeowners. These are available once every 12 months. You are eligible for this service if you:

Get a means-tested benefit and live with a child under five

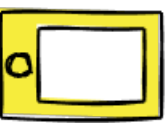
Live alone and are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick

Live with others who are of pensionable age, disabled, chronically sick or under 18 and you are also of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick

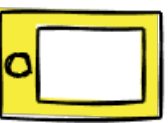
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Taking care of your clients...

## TAKE ACTION!

 0800 111 999  
national gas emergency service

contact your supplier to request your free gas safety check if you're eligible and haven't had a check in the last 12 months.



If your client is feeling unwell and CO poisoning is suspected, they must immediately call the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999. Also encourage them to visit to a GP, but people need to ask to be checked for possible CO poisoning.

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More information...

We have a range of free resources, including workshops, eLearning and videos. To find out more, contact us at:

[thinkco@gassafecharity.org.uk](mailto:thinkco@gassafecharity.org.uk)



[www.gassafecharity.org.uk](http://www.gassafecharity.org.uk)

Gas Safe Charity is a registered charity in England

Charity number 1131987